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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN PARLIAMENT, 5/23-5/29: AMBASSADOR  
MEETS WITH INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

REF: KABUL 1322

11. (SBU) The Ambassador met on May 28 with the Lower House International Relations Committee to discuss the new US strategy in Afghanistan and listen to MPs' concerns about security issues. MPs, led by committee chairman Abdul Rassoul Sayyaf (Kabul, Pashtun), welcomed greater US-Afghan cooperation on security issues, attention to border security, and promotion of better relations with neighboring countries and the Islamic world. Some MPs asked for greater US support to agricultural, infrastructure, and water use sectors. MPs Khudai Nazar Samanchar (Nimrooz, Baluch) and Sayed Ishaq Gailani (Paktika, Pashtun) said rule of law and good governance were also top concerns for themselves and their constituents. The Ambassador said he hoped this year's elections would energize the Afghan people with a rigorous debate on the government's performance and candidates' visions for the future of Afghanistan.

12. (SBU) The Ambassador's meeting was part of a larger effort over the next two months to engage with Parliament. The Ambassador met Lower House Speaker Qanooni on May 18, and will soon call on Upper House Deputy Speaker Hamed Gailani (sitting in for Speaker Sebghatullah Mojaddedi, who is in Turkey for lengthy medical treatment). The Ambassador plans to continue his Parliament outreach through a series of meetings with legislative committees. The goal is to focus on a substantive agenda, see as many MPs as possible in a timely manner, and minimize high-profile meetings with individual MPs during the election campaign season.

13. (SBU) In other business this week:

- The Lower House passed the Counternarcotics Law after adding in several provisions strengthening the government's ban on alcohol sales, use, and possession. MPs approved punishments of "public beatings" for public intoxication and an eight-year prison sentence for the sale of one liter of alcohol. During the debate, some MPs accused Western embassies of bringing alcohol into the country.
- Speaker Qanooni sidetracked the Private Security Companies Law by referring the law to the non-existent Commission on the Implementation and Oversight of the Constitution (reftel). Several MPs expressed frustration that Qanooni has referred controversial legislation to the commission as both a means to avoid debate on important issues and to kill bills he does not like.
- During debate over continuity of government after the May 22 constitutional expiration of the president's term, Qanooni reprimanded MPs who have represented their personal opinions as official Parliamentary positions. Some 150 MPs have publicly sided with a Supreme Court statement authorizing President Karzai to remain in office through the Aug. 20 election, while another 70 MPs have come out against the statement. Qanooni said that while MPs were free to discuss their personal opinions with the public, neither side had

successfully passed a resolution that put the Lower House on  
record one way or the other.  
EIKENBERRY